

To the Kings most Excellent Maiestie, the Lords Spirituall and Temporall, and the Commons in this present Parliament assembled.

The humble Petition of Thomas Russell, Esquire.



Sheweth:

THAT WHEREAS, the making of *Salt-Peter* within His Maiesties Realmes and Dominions, is a great safety and benefit to His Maiestie, and His Subjects in generall, for that it effectueth and assureth a certaine prouision thereof, for the furnishing of his Maiesties Stores, for the strength, defence, and benefit of his Maiesties said Realmes and Dominions; which if it should be had from forreine parts, is not to be obtained, but at the pleasure of other Princes, and most commonly at vnreasonable Rates, and the same so obtained, might happen to bee intercepted, or by contrary winds hindered, in time of need, or vtterly lost by Shipwracke, or other casualties on the Seas: And if no such hazzard were, yet the same is not vsually to bee bought, but for ready mony to bee transported, and payd for the same; whereby the Treasure of his Maiesties Realmes would be diminished, and other forreine Kingdomes thereby enriched. And whereas for making of the *Salt-Peter*, which hath been formerly, and now is made in his Maiesties said Realmes and Dominions, the Subjects haue had, and still haue their Houses, Douchouses, Cellars, &c. digged vp to their great trouble; and also their Carts taken for carying of the Liquors, Tubbes, &c. to places farre remote, to their exceeding great preiudice, which hath occasioned many complaints, not onely to the Iustices of Peace in most parts of his Maiesties Dominions, but oftentimes to His Maiestie, and the Lords of His Highnesse priue Counsell. And whereas also, there was neuer yet made, since the first making of *Salt-Peter* in this Kingdom, being about the beginning of the Reigne of Queene *Elizabeth*, of famous memory, notwithstanding all the trouble and grievance of the Subject, a third part of the *Salt-peter*, vsed for the ordinary seruice of the Kingdome, and in diuers yeeres not so much as was spent for the Kings Store, nor neere so much in time of Warre, when there was most occasion of it, but as well the King, as the Subject, were forced to procure the same from *Barbarie*, *France*, *Poland*, *Hamborough*, and other places in *Germany*. The *Salt-peter-men* hauing formerly vsed, as commonly they now doe, to the abuse of the King and the Subject, to take Composition money, of some two shillings, of some five shillings, of some tenne shillings, of some more, of some lesse, to spare their Houses, Stables, and Douchouses from digging, whereby the seruice intended, for making *Salt-Peter*, for his Maiestie is wholly neglected, though the Subject be continually charged with such composition money. And further if the *Salt-Peter-men*, in their accustomed course of working, should for a few yeeres longer digge Houses, &c. for making of so great a quantity of *Salt-Peter* as the Kingdome shall require, they would so impoverish the earth, that they would in short time hardly make any at all, there being no artificiall meanes vsed by them for enriching the earth, but that which casually happeneth, of which it is not fit to make *Salt-Peter*, againe in many yeeres. And whereas his Maiestie was informed, that the Petitioner had by his great traualle, paines, industry, and charges discovered and made knowne, a new way and meanes, not heretofore knowne, practised and perfected, for the making and refining, of perfect, good, seruicable, and Merchantable *Salt-Peter*, &c. whereby the Subject should bee freed from the digging of their houses, &c. And likewise from taking vp Carts for carying their Liquors, Tubbes, Ashes, &c. from place to place. And withall, that by this new way, the King should haue what quantity of *Salt-Peter* soeuer should be required both for his owne Store, and all prouisions of the Subject, and for his neighbour Nations, being in league and amity with his Maiestie

Vpon which Information, It pleased King *James* of blessed memory, to referre the consideration thereof vnto the Duke of *Buckingham* his Grace, the Right Honourable the Earle of *Middlesex*, then Lord Treasurer of *England*, and the Right honourable the Earle of *Tynes*, Master of the Ordinance: Who after long and many serious debatings (diuers trials being made of the certainty of making *Saltpeter* in this new course proposed, and the goodnesse thereof,) were pleased to recommend it backe to the said King *James*, as a proposition fit to bee embraced, and a Priuiledge for the sayd Worke to bee granted to the inuentor (for his encouragement) for 21. yeeres. But the warrant to Master Attourney Generall to draw vp the said priuiledge, being made solely by the said Earle of *Middlesex*, was so vnequally limited to price, and no certainty for the payment thereof being deliuered, with other strict Conditions and Prouisoos, vnfitting for so great a Seruice, intended for the generall good; That those who intended to aduenture the Stocke for erecting the Workes, were thereby vtterly disheartened, and would not proceede therein, whereby all the former charge of bringing the Inuention to perfection, and procuring the Priuiledge being solely laid out by the Inuentor, was like to be vtterly lost, and the seruice intended for the good of the Common-wealth wholly neglected.

WHEREVON a *Petition* being lately exhibited to His Maiestie that now is, for enlargement of the said Grant, It hath pleased His Maiestie, for the encouragement of the Inuentor, and to ease the Subject of the now grievance, and secure the Kingdome with quantity of *Salt-Peter*, graciously to condescend thereto: For the speedy execution and aduancement of which worke, The Inuentor is ready vpon his owne charge to erect a Worke forthwith, about the Citie of *London*, which after the Earth is ripened, and impregnated for making of *Salt-Peter*, shall produce weekly as much *Salt-Peter*, as now is or vsually hath been made in *London* and the liberties thereof; notwithstanding all the trouble the City is now put vnto: By which meanes there shall be made a full demonstration to such Persons as this honorable House shall appoint, both of the certaintie of the Workes, the profit of it, the quantitie, and the continuance thereof for euer. And that the *Salt-Peter* which shall be made in this new course, shall be farre better, and more vsfull in all conditions required in *Salt-Peter*, for the making of Powder, then any that now is brought into His Maiesties Store-house, from any *Salt-Peter-workes* in this Kingdome, or imported from any parts from beyond the Seas. But because so great a worke as this, for speedy making of the quantity of *Salt-Peter*, for the seruice of the whole Kingdome, cannot conueniently bee effected by any priuate Purse: The Inuentor therefore most humble prayeth, That this honourable house, will settle some present course, That vpon the demonstration made, as aforesaid, the summe of 20000.li. may bee in a readinesse, which will bee required for erecting, and stocking so many workes, as shall be sufficient to make 500. tunne of *Salt-Peter* yeerely, for his Maiesties, and the Subjects expence. The said summe of 20000.li. to be layd out according to the direction of the Inuentor, by such persons as this Honourable House shall for that purpose select; which Stocke of 20000.li. shall be repaid in seven yeeres, by euen and equall portions yeerely, either in *Saltpeter*, or in money, the first payment thereof to commence from the time that the Workes shall bee erected, and made fit to make *Salt-Peter*, which may bee compleated and fitted within one yeere, and the Stocke of *Coles*, *Vrine*, and *Ashes* provided: By meanes of which Stocke of 20000.li. the Petitioner may be enabled, (after demonstration vpon his owne cost and charges made as aforesaid) to erect and stocke so many workes, as shall serue to make sufficient quantitie of *Salt-Peter* for the seruice of his Maiestie and His Subjects, as aforesaid. It being a thing so much tending to the Subjects ease, and the Kingdomes security. And further, that this House will be honourably pleased to confirme his Maiesties Graunt to the Petitioner, for the said terme of 21. yeeres by Act of Parliament. In consideration whereof, besides all the former aduantages to the Subject, in freeing them from the now grievance, and safety of the King and Kingdomes, by making quantitie of *Saltpeter* sufficient for the seruice of the Kingdome; The Subject in generall, which haue any occasion to vse Powder, shall for euer reape a great benefit, farre beyond the vse of that money which the Petitioner doth require, for erecting and stocking the workes: both in regard of the goodnesse of the *Saltpeter* for making Powder, and in the cheapnesse thereof: For the Subject shall haue *Saltpeter* double refined, 10.li. in euery Tunne: better cheape then now they pay for *Saltpeter*, brought from beyond the Seas, which though it be but once refined, is now worth 90.li. the Tunne. The difference of these two being about 5.li. the Tunne, which is vpon iust account 15.li. on a Tunne cheaper; By which meanes they will also haue their Powder 15.s. on euery Barrell better cheape. For the Powder maker will deliuer 100. weight of Powder for 112.li. weight of *Saltpeter* once refined, which loseth 12.li. in the great hundred at the second refining: So if the Subject spend 400. Tunnes of Powder a yeere, the aduantage will be to the Subject in generall 6000.li. yeerely. And in regard the onely materiall for the artificiall impregnating of Earth for engendering *Saltpeter* is *Vrine*, there may be most of all the common Beggars about *London*, and in other Cities and Townes corporate, where the workes shall bee erected, continually employed, for gathering of *Vrine* for the vse of the said workes, whereby they may haue a competent meanes for their liuing without begging.

If it please this Honourable House to accept this offer of the Petitioner, hee will make it apparant by this course, that there may bee provided within two yeeres next following a Magazin of Powder in euery Citie, Towne corporate, Fort, and Port of this Kingdome, for seven yeeres Store, alwayes before hand in readinesse, for any seruice; there being sufficient Materials in the places aforesaid to bee had euery yeere, for seven yeeres prouision, and the truth of this may bee shewen to such as this Honourable House shall appoint, within two moneths.

The Petitioner humbly profereth, and dedicateth this his seruice, with all his labour, time spent, and charge formerly bestowed, for the good of his Maiestie, and the honour and safety of the Kingdome, to the graue consideration of the Honourable Assembly, in this high Court of Parliament; And if any can propound a better course, for easing the Subject of the now grievance, and the safety of the Kingdome in generall, by prouiding sufficient quantity of *Saltpeter* to bee alwayes in readinesse in severall places of the Kingdome, where Workes may be erected, the Petitioner will euer be ready, to the vttermost of his skill and endeauour, to further and aduance the same.